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Search for this radio show by title: "Mediating Conflict in Middle School"

Listen to the program and answer the following questions.

1. According to the speakers, mediation is what?

A process for people to do problem solving. Mediation offers a chance to have resolution. It lets them get their feelings out, because kids know they're feelings and what they need better than adults do.

2. According to the program, what do middle school students disagree about?

Most conflicts arose because people weren't confident with who they were, they were still finding themselves. They all want to follow one stereotype and they don't know how to find themselves or how to really be themselves yet. Conflicts between boys occur more, because guys are starting to become more sexually and they act it out. Boys are really prideful and have to back their honor, so when they get called out for a fight, they have to fight. Girls conflicts arise, when someone gets left out of a group or gets left behind, betrayed or disrespected.

3. What did students fight about in your middle school?

The fights in my middle school included a lot of boy fights. There were many instances where boys got in fights, because they got called out in class or many times they were just being bullied. A lot of the students who had bad socioeconomic status's often got picked on the most, because bullies targeted them and knew they were different and weren't like everyone else. Many of the girl fights in my school arose when one girl liked another girl's boyfriend, or if a girl was starting certain rumors about someone else, that's when the girls usually got into fights at my school.

4. Explain the mediation process.

The steps of mediation are: the teacher receives a referral, then the teacher gets both students and asks them if they are willing to go to mediation, because it is a willing process. If they agree, they both tell their story with the other person in room, so that other person realizes their story and steps into their shoes. A lot of times when this starts happening, they start clarifying and understanding that there was a lot of miscommunication. They then do a written agreement or a verbal agreement, a lot of them like the written agreement because it is more concrete to them. They then do post mediation surveys and then 2-3 weeks later they do follow ups, and make sure the kids are doing okay.

5. What do you think about the concept in mediation where mediators don't give advice?

I think it is very strong, that they aren't telling the students exactly what to do. They help give the students the power and the faith in them that they know that they can resolve this conflict on themselves and later become friends in the end.

6. What are some important tips about mediation?

Let each student get their own voice heard out, be respectful to each kid as well. Let each student realize and understand that there was miscommunication and let the students try to be the best they can be. You need to help plant a seed in student's mind, so that in the future they will not resort to violence, but in turn work the conflict out with one another.

7. Do you agree with the comments about violence in schools? Explain.

Yes, because a lot of times the problem keeps escalating, and there is more fuel to the fire and the kids sometimes feel they are backed up against a wall. When they feel they are up against a wall, they feel they have no other choice but to fight. They also fight because they feel empowered. A lot of the fights

in my school happened because of rumors that kept building up and up, led to kids being hurt, and many of these students didn't want to look bad and let people think the rumors were true. So, in turn, they resorted to violence, not because they wanted to, but because they felt that they had to.

8. Do you think mediation will work with bullies or do you think it's a life-long attitude? Explain. I think it will work with more than half of the kids or bullies. Many of the kids, will learn that there was miscommunication and it also gives the kids a voice. I think if a certain kid has had mediation, that in the future they will handle things a lot differently and maybe the kids will handle it on their own. The next time I think they will communicate with the other student better. I think you will see a recurrence when they are younger though, but when they get older I think they will grow up out of it and they will soon realize it and move on.

2) On a separate sheet of paper, write two different scenarios for a middle school fight or disagreement from two points of view. Make these two scenarios as true to life as possible, including good details. We will try to mediate the disputes in class starting on October 24.

My Sample Conflict Scenario

Kaitlin's Story

I'm really sick of that priss-pants Ashley calling me a skank. Today I was walking into Mrs. Morgan's language arts class and Ashley started whispering to her friend Cara about me. I know they were talking about me because Cara's friend kept staring at me and laughing. They were looking at the new skirt and earrings I got last night and laughing. They are both such preppy snobs. Just because my family has to shop at Walmart, doesn't make me a skank. I have to pay for all my clothes with my own babysitting money! The real reason Ashley hates me is because her boyfriend Jake thinks I'm hot. He's always flirting with me in math class and the Cara goes and tells Ashley. Next time that bag Ashley talks about me to Cara or anybody else, I'm going to fight her after school.

Ashley's Story

Yeah, I've talked about Kaitlin because she is always hanging all over the guys and wearing clothes that are too tight. She doesn't have any friends because she's such a low-life. She's always flirting with my boyfriend, but he doesn't really like her. He thinks she's disgusting. Everybody does. She says she's going to fight me but that's just crazy. I don't fight! Somebody needs to tell her how to dress and to get a life!

BRING ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS AND SCENARIOS TO CLASS ON Oct. 31!